



**State of Wisconsin**  
**Department of Public Instruction**  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

DPI 2005-145 A

Wednesday, October 26, 2005

CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer, (608) 266-3559

### **Cunningham receives Milken Educator award**

MADISON—Described as a treasure, Julie Cunningham is said to epitomize all that is great about teaching. “She models lifelong learning, brings a feminine presence to a male-dominated domain, challenges the edges of learning for her students, and excites her students as they learn.”

A chemistry teacher at Lake Mills High School, Cunningham is credited with doubling enrollment in the school’s advanced chemistry course, integrating technology into the classroom, and constantly engaging her students in investigation. Students place enrollment in Cunningham’s class as a highest priority. One student commented that if Mrs. Cunningham taught all the science classes, she would take them all and would do well in college. Cunningham is known for being open minded and accepting of students’ diverse learning needs, setting high, yet reasonable, expectations for all.

The district’s science scores on the ACT college admission test have increased since Cunningham joined the school. Lake Mills won the Conference Academic Bowl for the first time in 12 years, with the difference being attributed to almost perfect scores in science.

Cunningham serves on the district’s K-12 curriculum committee and writes for science journals. She created a project to teach computer lab techniques to science instructors, has been a conference presenter, developed and ran a marine biology high school camp, and is active in her own professional development. She holds a bachelor of science degree in zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned her teaching certification from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. Prior to coming to Lake Mills, Cunningham taught at Clintonville High School where she was a member of the National Honor Society Faculty Committee and served as an assistant forensics coach. She is a member of the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers and the National Society of Biology Teachers.

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**Naef receives Milken Educator award**

MADISON—As one who both teaches students and inspires colleagues, Kendra Naef is described as having a strength of character that makes her a visible professional and life-long learner who is constantly exploring both her profession and discipline, which she then transfers to her classroom.

Naef, a family and consumer science education teacher at Kimberly High School, grounds her teaching in academic standards and employs instructional practices that revolve around critical analysis and student self-assessment. Students practice action-based research which helps them develop a higher capacity for independent work. Her leadership in the classroom showcases that teaching must focus on student learning and student success.

A Partners Program she developed pairs cognitively disabled and regular education students, using team-building exercises to forge a strong bond and sense of camaraderie among students to support both academic and developmental learning. Those bonds are exemplified by a recent graduation ceremony when a cognitively disabled student asked to have a photo taken with Naef and the school's valedictorian.

Naef recently earned a grant for a new leadership program. Her impact in the classroom is demonstrated by the increasing number of students who either enter into health-related fields upon graduation or pursue postsecondary education in related disciplines.

Active on numerous committees and as a workshop presenter, Naef received the national New Achiever Award from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. She is currently working on a concurrent master's and doctorate degree in Family and Consumer Science Education. Naef is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Prior to teaching in Kimberly, she served as an adjunct instructor in early childhood education at Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton.

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